

# THE BUILDERS' BENEVOLENT INSTITUTION.

FIRST ANNIVERSARY.

THE dinner in Freemasons' Hall on the 19th instant passed off as well as favourable prospects, full attendance, and good cheer could make it. These latter causes, however, and the good humoured buzz of fellowship in which they were naturally manifested, tended not a little to prevent our reporter from doing justice to the details of his more grave and sober duties. Lord Robert Grosvenor was in the chair, and was supported by Professor Hosking, Mr. Gutch, Mr. Kendall, Mr. Kendall, jun., Mr. L'Aaron, Mr. Bird, Mr. George Bird, Mr. Ponsford, with various other gentlemen hereafter named, and a goodly company of between 150 and 200 gentlemen, with a fair sprinkling of ladies in the gallery.

Mr. Biers in the course of the evening read several, and alluded to various other, letters of apology for non-attendance, among which was one from Lord Morpeth, expressive of his Lordship's consciousness that he "had got himself into a scrape" by keeping himself disengaged for the dinner on a day, namely, Saturday, when he now found that he was but too likely to get no dinner. Having, therefore, unwittingly made other use of Wednesday evening, he had determined to fine himself in the sum of ten guineas, and further to hold himself bound in duty to be at the disposal of the Builders' Benevolent authorities, as Chairman or otherwise, at the next anniversary.

The loyal feelings of the assembly (and right loyal they were), having had vent in the usual orthodox phalanx of toasts, the Chairman proceeded to "the toast of the evening," namely, "Prosperity to the Builders' Benevolent Institution," when his Lordship renewed the previous expression of his good wishes on the foundation of the institution. In predicting success, it was incumbent on him, as on all, to do everything in their power to realise their own prediction. And certainly, when they looked back upon their first meeting on 19th July last, in a small room (on a very warm day by-the-way), and contrasted that with their present assembly, there was good reason to hope that an institution, the planting of which had so soon begun to attract attention, would prosper and grow up into a goodly tree. To his own assurance of support already given, he hoped his occupation of the chair on the present occasion would prove that he was not unfaithful. He only regretted that the work had not been done twenty or thirty years since. Of all trades that of the builders was the least excusable, seeing that they themselves so often lent an indispensable hand in the establishment of all sorts of Asylums for the unfortunate in other trades and professions. He trusted, however, that receiving his remarks in the spirit in which they were given, they would now, at least, make up for lost time. And he was glad to think that in spite of an almost unparalleled season of depression, contributions so extensive had already been made. These were hopeful signs of life; but they must not forget, that the institution could not proceed to business till the full amount of the sum decided on (4,000*l.*) should be realized. In course of his speech, the noble Lord drew particular attention to the statement of the president in the printed report of the first general meeting, in which the whole subject was engrossed, and which his Lordship said should be stereotyped for the refreshment of their memory at every future anniversary meeting of the friends of the institution.

On rising to read the secretary's report, Mr. Biers said that the predictions of his lordship (Lord Grosvenor) were indeed being realised to an extent no one could have supposed. Up to the present time, large subscriptions and donations were being received (amounting in all, as we understood, to upwards of 1,000*l.*). He admitted the singularity of the fact that while almost all other classes of trade in the metropolis had benevolent institutions, a body of men such as the builders should have wanted one till now. With such support as they were now receiving, however, he did not see how they could fail in the complete, even though dilatory, accomplishment of the end in view. Not only had Lord Robert Grosvenor and other noble

Lords and Members of Parliament, and gentlemen of various classes in society, well supported them in the attainment of an extensive design of charity, comprehending not only trade subscribers, not only unfortunate metropolitan builders, but others throughout the country, and not only these, but workmen also,—a design therefore, which builders alone, with their locked-up funds, were unable, by mere individual subscription, to accomplish,—but they had also received the most friendly support of other parties more or less in connection with them: such were the official referees—such were the district surveyors almost to a man. Under auspices such as these, then, was it at all surprising that they should meet here under the most hopeful circumstances, and with the most favourable prospects? Will it not rather be surprising if we do not henceforth progress still faster than heretofore, with the support of parties of all descriptions, a list of whom, now in his hands, he was happy to say, and in the face of a depression so great and so general, redounded to the credit of all. Zealous as he was, he had almost despaired at first in bringing out this abridged institution under anything like the favourable auspices which alone would have satisfied his desires: but when he already saw around him nearly two hundred gentlemen assembled together for the sole purpose of promoting the interests of this charity—of relieving in old age and misfortune those who had failed in their endeavours to accumulate the power to do so for themselves—he had no longer any doubts of meeting with the most complete success. It may be said, and he knew it had been said, by parties who belong to somewhat similar institutions, that funds have already been collected for such exigencies. True, there were some local societies, such as those of the city corporations and others, he was happy to say, but the benefits of these are limited to parties subscribing for their own behoof; whereas misfortune alone, without even the passport of a single shilling in the shape of subscription, constituted the sole claim to aid from the new institution, and the greater the necessity the higher the claim. To relieve such an immense mass of misfortune as that with which they meant to cope, it was absolutely necessary that something like adequate funds should be in the first place accumulated. And if 4,000*l.* should prove a stumbling-block in the way of so much contemplated good, he should certainly be ashamed of his own trade and of those who should support them in so extensive and general a design of charity. Their subscription lists, however, were beginning to tell another tale. The speaker then went over several long and weighty lists of names and subscriptions, old and new.

The health of the chairman was then cordially drunk, and responded to by his Lordship, who said, that as he had acted in capacity of chairman for no less than twelve hours in all, there and elsewhere, that day,—an item, as it was merely, in the still more tedious term of 145 hours, during which he had of late sustained the same honourable post in the Dublin Election Committee,—he hoped they would excuse his now retiring, with best wishes for their continued prosperity.

Mr. Grissell was then requested to take the chair, but declined, on the ground that Mr. Biers, as the president of the institution, was the proper person to do so. Mr. Grissell dwelt at some length on the advantages of the society, expressed his warm feelings in favour of it, and ended by proposing the health of the president, for whom he had much esteem: a more zealous, useful, and diligent member of society, he was assured, did not exist.

The health of the three official referees being proposed with due encomiums by the president, who said he had good opportunity, in a Committee which lately sat on the Buildings Bill, to observe the integrity with which they discharged the duties of their office;—

Professor Hosking returned thanks in an able but brief speech. Feeling warmly as he did the importance of the institution, the anniversary of which they had met to celebrate, and cordially concurring in its excellent objects, he had felt himself bound to accept the invitation to attend there that day, and to give

it all the advantage which his presence, from his official position with reference to the building interests, might be thought to afford.

The "District Surveyors" were next proposed as a toast, with thanks for the ready assistance they had at once afforded. The toast was warmly responded to, and Mr. Gutch (Paddington) returned thanks neatly.

The President then said, without publicity and advocacy they could have done nothing: the press had aided them warmly, and deserved their best thanks, and no portion of it more so than *THE BUILDER*. He would venture therefore in proposing "The Press," to couple with the toast the breath of the editor of that publication, Mr. Godwin.

Mr. Godwin said his name had never before been connected publicly with *THE BUILDER*; but inasmuch as whatever deficiencies there might be in that publication, no bad motive or ill-feeling had ever dictated a line in it, he saw no reason why he should refuse to acknowledge the toast which had been so kindly proposed by the President. His great aim in that publication was to spread information, to aid merit, to advocate the right, and induce good-feeling. As to the periodical press generally, whose sphere was so much larger, and province so much more extended, than that of the particular journal named, no thanks which that meeting could give, no praise which it could award, would be too great. The periodical press was the ruler of society, and as to the press of England in particular at that moment, he would unhesitatingly assert that it merited the applause of the world. If any proof of this were needed he would remind them of the manner in which the press, during the late excitement, had almost unanimously come forward and advocated powerfully the preservation of order, and the maintenance of the constitution, while they nevertheless urged the redress of grievances. He would take this opportunity of remarking how admirably the building operatives had behaved at this same time. There were some few who avowed themselves discontented, and it could scarcely be wondered at, considering the amount of distress prevailing; but the great majority shewed they saw clearly, that any steps which would tend to the injury of their masters would go to the ruin of themselves. This was the time for the masters to shew a full consideration for their men. They themselves had suffered great depression, but he believed, with their musical friends, that there was "a good time coming," if they would "wait a little longer." The importance of the building interest could scarcely be overrated. Abroad they said, "when building goes well all goes well," and this was quite true. Builders had improved greatly in position of late years: intelligence had spread, and almost as a matter of course, this institution, so long in coming, had arisen. The advantages it promises are great, and not merely to those who may need its assistance. It gives the feeling of shoulder to shoulder and help one another: it will induce habits of forethought and provision; and, better still, shews that a spirit of charity is abroad,—a charity, too, which extends beyond the mere giving of money,—a charity which extends to sympathy. He assured them he felt the deepest interest in the progress of the institution, and trusted it would gain strength with time, and become not merely a refuge for those who might be overtaken by adversity, but a bond of union between what were too often ignorantly considered antagonistic classes.

**THE BRICK DUTY.**—At Wordsley petty sessions, lately, Messrs. William and John Warr, brickmakers, were charged with a fraud on the revenue by placing 2,096 bricks in their kiln before they were charged with duty. The defendants called witnesses, and cross-examined the exciseman, so as at least to shew the possibility that the charge might have arisen from the exciseman's own negligence; but they were "fined in the mitigated penalty of 12*l.* 10*s.* and duty on 2,096 bricks;" so that the brick duty seems to throw the responsibility of an exciseman's negligence on the parties over whose power or opportunity of committing such inaccuracies he ought himself to be the check.